



## Strathcona High Schools

75 Years 1907 – 1982

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75 Years  
of  
Strathcona High Schools

1907 – 1982

Compiled by Terry Butler

Strathcona Triunion Association  
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## *Dedication*

1982 marks the 75th anniversary of the first high school in Strathcona. This occasion, it was felt, should hardly go by unnoticed and as a result a small group of people gathered (at the instigation of Lee Phipps, principal of Strathcona Composite High School) to determine if anyone else was interested in planning some form of a reunion.

We found a strong interest, not only from Strathcona Collegiate graduates but also from their children and grandchildren who had attended Garneau, University, and Strathcona Composite. Hence the reunion became a Triunion, a reunion for the three high schools which were an outgrowth of the first high school in South Edmonton. The Triunion Committee covers a large number of volunteers who have done a lot of work in order to ensure an enjoyable weekend.

The mailing list developed to reach all those who have attended these schools has grown to well over 9000 names, a tribute to the dedicated efforts of various committee members and an eager ex-student population.

This history booklet was conceived as a memento of the Triunion weekend on October 8, 9 and 10 of 1982 and tries to strike a balance between the informative and the entertaining.

I wish to thank all the volunteers who have helped prepare for this weekend. We all look forward to attending the 100th anniversary of the first high school in 25 years time.

Maury Van Vliet

## *Credits*

Grateful thanks to everyone who contributed material to this booklet. A special thanks to the School Historians who wrote about each year for their yearbook. They may have wondered about the significance of the events which were so immediate to them; their work is a priceless treasure today.

The following publications were used with the kind permission of:

*100 Years of Edmonton Education*, Edmonton Public School Board, 1982.

Mike Kostek

*SCHS Souvenir Program*, January 26, 1956.

Strathcona Composite High School Archives, Harwood McQuaig

*Address given by Trustee Mrs. Edith Rogers at the Official Opening of D. S. MacKenzie Junior High School on March 7, 1969.*

Strathcona Composite High School Archives, Harwood McQuaig

Edith Rogers

*The City of Strathcona 1891 – 1912: "We see just ahead the glory of the sun in his might."*, John Gilpin, M. A. Thesis, The University of Alberta, 1978.

John Gilpin

"The Strathcona Collegiate Institute", Harry Stamhuis, *Strathcona Plaindealer*, No. 10, fall 1980.

The Strathcona Historical Foundation

*Strathcona High School 1907 – 1967 In Retrospect*, Duncan Innes, 1967.

Strathcona Composite High School Archives, Harwood McQuaig

*The Story of Edmonton School District No. 7, 1885 – 1935*, George McKee, Edmonton Public School Board, 1935.

Strathcona Composite High School Archives, Harwood McQuaig

*Description of the New Collegiate Institute Building*, Strathcona Collegiate Institute Souvenir Program, 1909.

City of Edmonton Archives

Photos reproduced courtesy of the Provincial Archives, Edmonton

Wendy Medlin

The most valuable thing in this book is the personal recollections of many wonderful people. I would like to thank:

Bill Wagner, George Davies, Herb Thompson, Mrs. Ethel Turcotte, Annie Roberts, Lillian Reid, Athelstan Bisset, Grace Martin, Hazel Rutherford, Helen Martin, Ken Tookey, Edith Parker, Cathy Miller, Kay Wark, Cay Isles, Orville Stratte, Cal Holmgren, Evelyn Brown, Hope Pennock, Phil Davies, Rod Clark, Keith Pfrimmer, Jack Dawe, Lynne Forman, Doug Hepburn, Sharon Clement, George Luck, Larry McMahon, Ralph Clarke, Linda Blue, Moira Staples, and Barb Cadek.

## *Foreword*

The names used in this booklet are those that the people of the era will remember. Maiden names, for instance, are used wherever possible. The passage of time has brought marriage, promotion, and additional titles to these people; I hope the lettered among us will not be offended by being referred to as a plain ‘John Doe’.

When school years are mentioned, the year of graduation is given; 1977 means the 1976 – 1977 academic year.

Much of what is here recorded is personal recollection and could not (and need not) be verified. It is presented with the hope it will stir your curiosity about the rich history we are all a part of. Any mistakes or omissions are sincerely regretted.

Putting together this booklet has been one of the most pleasant events of “my school days”: I hope this weekend will be so for you.

Terry Butler



For many years Departmental exams loomed frighteningly at the end of the high school trail. The road to the end, however, was paved with many enjoyable moments for all of us.

Photo 1977.

## **Early Strathcona Schools**

In 1907 the town of Strathcona was incorporated as a city. With the arrival of two transcontinental railways to the city, there was unbridled optimism. Plans were laid for the construction of an impressive school building to accommodate the expected tide of families coming West. It is the 75th anniversary of the laying of that cornerstone that has brought us together here this weekend. The cornerstone of Strathcona Collegiate Institute is, in that sense, the cornerstone of 75 years of south Edmonton high school education.

But there is a prelude to this story; the beginnings of high school education on the south side.

There are two people who were very materially responsible for the development of education in Strathcona's early years. Alexander Rutherford, who became premier of Alberta, its first minister of Education, and chancellor of The University of Alberta. He was the secretary of the Public School Board in the early days when Strathcona was a small town. His commitment and influence gave impetus to the development of higher education. Another person of influence was chairman of that school board, Thomas Bennett, later mayor of Strathcona.

At an informal meeting in the sitting room of Ontario House in November 1891, Strathcona residents discussed the formation of a school district. In January 1892 "the people interested took up a subscription and engaged a teacher on their own account". The first school room in Strathcona was the upper front room of Ontario House, a log building used as a hotel, later called the Farmer's Home, located on Whyte Avenue near the tracks.

The school moved for a period to a little log house owned by Vic Anderson, in the same area. The enrollment in each of these schools was from 15 to 20 pupils.

The first teacher, Mr. Wilkie, was a Presbyterian ministerial student. He was succeeded in a few months by William Douglas, who taught the school in Strathcona until December 1892.

There was not unanimity among the residents of Strathcona as to whether a formal school was needed in their small community. At a meeting of ratepayers on 11 February 1892 "some argued that a school



These are the first two school buildings in Strathcona.

Photo 1890s.

would be too great a burden, that the people could not afford to pay taxes; others that there were not enough pupils to warrant the venture." The meeting concluded that a school was wanted and elected John Walter, John McKenzie, and Joseph McDonald as trustees, John Walter being the chairman. The Strathcona School District No. 216 North West Territories was established on 17 June 1892.

In August 1892 the District requested permission to "borrow the sum of \$800.00 for the purpose of purchasing a school site, erecting a school building and furnishing same." The frame building which they built stood at the northwest corner of Whyte Avenue and 105 Street. It was 20 feet by 30 feet with a small porch in the front. It was completed in fall 1892. In January 1893 classes moved to the new school.

By 1893 the students had filled the frame school house and some classes were being accommodated in the back part of a building owned by

Harry Wilson. A second teacher, Mrs. Clark, had been appointed at New Year 1893.

A more substantial building was constructed in 1894. The Niblock Street School stood at Second Avenue (north) and Niblock Street (on the southwest corner of 105 Street at 84 Avenue). It was a four room brick building which cost \$4000 to build. The two teachers at this time, Mrs. Clark and Miss Short, shared the teaching duties in this building.

In November 1896 Duncan MacKenzie was appointed principal. He began at the school on 2 January 1896. He was the first high school teacher in South Edmonton. His salary was \$660 for the first year.

He had come to Edmonton at the urging of his brother, Kenneth MacKenzie, who was a teacher and later the mayor of the town of Edmonton and again the city of Edmonton after its incorporation. According to his diary, on his first day at the school, it was 40° below zero. Welcome to Alberta! He boarded in South Edmonton; his room cost \$4.50 a week.

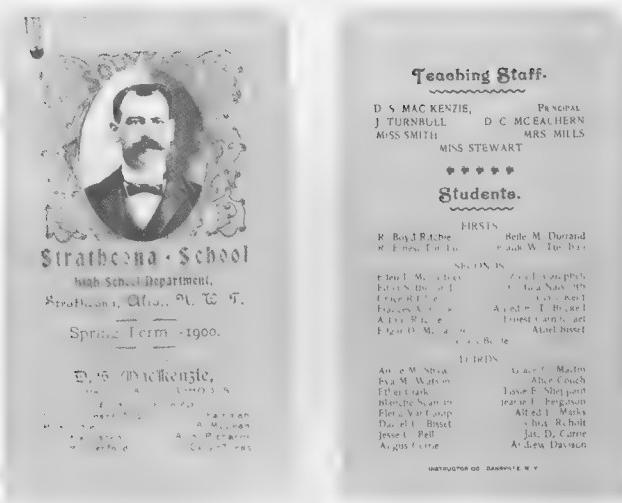
The first high school class in Strathcona was begun in the Niblock Street School. At that time schools in the Northwest used the Ontario school curriculum, and at Niblock Street there were two pupils enrolled in Standard VI. In the next two years Standard VII and VIII were added. In 1897 W. Briggs joined the teaching staff. There were 186 pupils in Strathcona schools and only three teachers; a ratio of 60 to 1! In 1898 W. Richardson joined the teaching staff.

A fifth teacher, E. H. Smith was appointed in 1899 and taught her pupils on the ground floor of the building which had recently been vacated by the "Stratheona Plaindealer". Other space was secured for a new department in J. Nettleton's candy factory. D. MacEachern was appointed in January 1899; he was persuaded to come to Strathcona by Duncan MacKenzie.

Duncan MacKenzie's high school class numbered 18 pupils in 1899. He taught them all the subjects. In the spring of 1900 high school enrollment had jumped to 33.

The Grandin Street School (demolished in 1964) at 100 Street between 85 and 86 Avenues, was built in 1901. It relieved the pressure on the Niblock Street school.

In 1902 the school system received a grant of \$1500 from Lord Strathcona which was used to provide laboratory equipment for the high school. Language training was introduced, with classes in Latin and



## 1900 high school graduation souvenir program from Strathcona School.

German by 1905.

A new principal, W. Thompson, was appointed and began in January 1904 when Duncan MacKenzie left.

In February 1906 Duggan Street School, (still standing and called Queen Alexandra) on 78 Avenue between 106 and 107 Street, was opened. This six room brick school cost \$27,000. The high school classes in Niblock Street and Grandin schools were moved to the new building. Niblock Street school was demolished, for the land was going to be used for the most ambitious of the early Strathcona schools.

One of the teachers at this time was G. Fred McNally who later became chancellor of the University of Alberta.

By 1906 the Strathcona school system employed 12 teachers and had over 1000 students. There were approximately 40 students in each of the three high school grades. Standard VII was accepted as entrance to university, and Standard VIII accepted as first year university work.

R. Jenkins was appointed the principal in the fall, 1906. He served for two years.

## Strathcona Collegiate Institute

With incorporation in 1907, major plans were laid for the growth of Strathcona. These plans included a modern, first-rate high school, which was christened Strathcona Collegiate Institute.

The cornerstone of the building was laid in a ceremony on 18 October 1907 by the Premier and Minister of Education, Alexander Rutherford. A souvenir trowel, commemorating the event, was presented by the architect to the Premier.

The building was designed by the architects Johnson and Lines. Total cost of the imposing building was \$86,000. The souvenir booklet of the 1909 official opening describes it as follows: "The institute is a fine building of four storeys, upwards of one hundred feet in length, with a splendid foundation of gray sandstone from the upper Saskatchewan River."

"On the first two floors are ten rooms fully equipped for teaching purposes, three rooms intended as private studies for the masters, a principal's office and a combined board room and library. At the top of the building is a large assembly hall which seats about 500 people."

The program of the opening ceremonies gives further evidence that the school was built with the latest of modern equipment. It describes in detail "the thermostat, or automatic regulator", clearly an advanced device in that day, and concludes the explanation of its working principles by assuring: "This system not only works thus theoretically, but has been in use during the past month and has proven to actually regulate the temperature . . .".

The Science rooms "were designed after plans submitted by the L. E. Knot Apparatus Co., of Boston, Mass., and are similar in lay-out to the large American High Schools." There was a room for scientific demonstrations with "a sliding blackboard on pulleys, which drops to the floor, leaving a large specially prepared wall surface, on which, as a screen, lantern pictures may be thrown." There was even a darkroom for use by amateur student photographers.

In selecting a principal for Strathcona Collegiate Institute, the South Edmonton Trustees sought the advice of Mr. John Seath, Superintendent of Education in the Toronto area. The letter written by A. Mode, Secretary of the Board, indicates the concerns of the Board: "What we



Strathcona Collegiate Institute. Photo 1909.

require is a young man of good appearance, but with sufficient experience to warrant the appointment, as he will have 16 teachers under him. The board are not particular as to what department he will take, for, if we can secure a strong organizer and disciplinarian, we will make the other teachers fit in to suit his department. . . . What we require in chief is a man with ability to organize the different standards properly, and of such character as will hold the respect and affection of all the teachers, pupils, and in fact the general public. Would you therefore be kind enough to give me your personal opinion of each of the following gentlemen who have applied for the position?" Reference to 16 teachers shows the ambitious plans for the school district: Strathcona Collegiate Institute opened with three teachers, principal George McKee, G. Fred McNally and George Robertson.

Present at the formal opening ceremonies were Alberta's Lieutenant-Governor, the Premier Alexander Rutherford and University

President Henry Marshall Tory. The school opened with 71 high school students.

The extra space in the newly opened school was occupied by the fledgling University of Alberta. It had been housed in Duggan Street School, and had to wait until 1911 for the completion of Athabasca Hall, the first building on the University Campus. During this time an honorary Doctor of Laws degree was conferred on Lord Strathcona.

Alexander Rutherford contributed many books to help form the library for the school. His interest in literature was infectious and his generosity most appreciated. He gave \$20 book prizes to the top high school students in 1904 and 1905, and assisted financially with supplying school texts to the schools.

The pay scale in early Strathcona for teachers was substantially below par for the other Western Canadian cities. A high school principal earned \$1600 a year; the lowest standard teacher began at \$600 per year in 1906. George Robertson queried the situation, and backed up his request with a comparison of the salary scales from other cities. The situation was remedied shortly thereafter.

The name of the school was changed in 1913 by the trustees to Strathcona High School. Scottish stonemasons were commissioned to chisel away the raised letters spelling Strathcona Collegiate Institute so that the new name could be displayed proudly on the building. A discerning eye can still detect the hollowed letters COLL of Collegiate.

## **Memories: Strathcona Collegiate Institute to 1912**

Bill Wagner, former Strathcona Collegiate Institute teacher, speaks of "fierce competition between Strathcona and Victoria, the top teams in hockey and track and field."

The gym was on the third floor, and at times athletic activities "brought down the roof onto the lower floors".

Mrs. Ethel Turcotte, former Duggan Street School student, remembers using slates for exercise work.



This photograph shows Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea, Lord Strathcona, and Premier Rutherford. It is dated 7 September 1909. Lord Strathcona was in Strathcona to receive an honorary degree from the newly formed University of Alberta.

Herb Thompson recalls:

"At first I felt regimented. The girls came and went through the west entrance and the boys through the east. The teachers used the main entrance on 84 Avenue. The pupils marched from rooms in straight lines. If a class was going to the second floor a teacher stood on the landing on each end and the Almighty have mercy on your soul if you talked on the way. In my Grade 10 year [in a high school in North Dakota] we walked from room to room as we do now."

Annie Roberts remembers spending New Year's Eve on skates at the south side rink, "with a live band".

When she attended Strathcona Collegiate Institute the present location of Strathcona Composite High School was the Athletic Grounds, and there were horses stabled under the bleachers!

Lillian Reid, who taught at the Niblock Street School until February 1906, recollects that the University of Alberta used to conduct night lectures in Strathcona Collegiate Institute.

Athelstan Bisset, a student in the first year of SCI recalls the persuasive presence of Duncan MacKenzie:

"Perfect discipline was maintained, not by rule, threat, or punishment, but by something undeclared radiating from the personality of the teacher—and all was well. The necessity of stricter measures of control rarely arose, but in the rare instances of refractory behavior, D. S. knew well how to quell the rebel."

Under D. S. a student could leave the room without permission, if done quietly.

And if a student wished, during the study period, to seek enlightenment on some abstruse point he or she had full liberty to sit beside a classmate and talk together, so long as they disturbed no other."

Grace Martin was a student in the first year of SCI. Her first school was Niblock Street School where Duncan MacKenzie was the principal. The name of the town was at first South Edmonton; it was changed to Strathcona officially when visited by Lord Strathcona in 1906.

Hazel Rutherford, the daughter of premier Rutherford, was a Strathcona Collegiate Institute student in the first years. She remembers attending the school and especially taking Chemistry and German classes from E. L. Luck.

Helen Martin attended Niblock Street School. She remembers her teachers, including Duncan MacKenzie and Mr. Kerr. Her family lived very near the school.

The hockey matches she recollects were very rowdy affairs; the rivalry between Edmonton and Strathcona was fierce.



The initial teaching staff at Strathcona Collegiate Institute;  
G. Fred McNally, principal McKee, and George Robertson.

Photo 1909.

## **Strathcona High School**

In 1912 the school districts of Strathcona and Edmonton were amalgamated, at the same time the cities were merged. Residents of that time remember the long and often angry debate about the merits of amalgamation (does that sound like a familiar story?)

In September 1912 a commercial department was inaugurated in Strathcona High School. L. Taylor was in charge; in 1913 K. Barnett took over. In 1920 the commercial department moved to the King Edward School building, under the direction of P. Rose. It was known as South Side Commercial High School. It soon moved to the new King Edward School, on the east side of 101 Street, in 1922. The department moved once again, in 1925 to the Garneau elementary school building, but returned to King Edward School the next year. It moved soon after to Garneau, where it mercifully remained until the reorganization of the schools in 1938. Through it all the school remained part of Strathcona High School both administratively and in the minds of its students.

In 1920 Ross Sheppard became principal; he was an honors graduate in mathematics and an excellent math teacher. He was a 1924 Olympic athlete, and promoted sports at Scona with vigor.

Charlie Scarborough was a mathematics teacher at the school. He had been a student and enlisted during the first World War. In 1952 the students established a trophy in his honor, to be awarded each year to the student who best combines scholastic achievement and service to the school. Charlie Scarborough taught for 23 years in Edmonton schools.

The school motto was *ut qui ministrat*, which means “as one who serves” (Luke 22:26). The school colors were red and gold.

### **Memories: Strathcona High School 1912 – 1938**

George Davies, who attended Strathcona High School from 1913 to 1916, lived near the school, and remembers playing in the building after the workmen left for the day.



Ross Sheppard, principal of Strathcona High School from 1920 until 1938, and Duncan Innes, head of Garneau division of Strathcona High School and later principal of Strathcona. Photos 1954 and 1940.

Sports always took a back seat to academic performance: one of his class mates was forced to postpone his final pre-meet track practice until his neglected math assignment was completed to principal Ross Sheppard's satisfaction. George's brother Art was city sports meet champ.

A favorite outing was a steamer ride up the North Saskatchewan to Big Island. The trip only cost one dollar; the stern paddler was done up in Japanese lanterns; and Lynch's orchestra provided the music.

The most popular mode of south side transportation was by streetcar, fondly known as the "Toonerville Trolley"; Harry Hutton was the driver that many remember, although a "hazardous Scot named Bob Chambers" may also ring a bell.

Ken Tookey, a student in 1914 and later a high school teacher recollects:

"When Mr. Edmonds appeared as a new teacher, the big boys decided to test the spirit of the newcomer. Percy Benjamin Lawton let loose in the classroom a newly-hatched chick. He was ordered to retrieve it and remove it. It is not easy to catch a bashful chick amid the jungle of desks and human legs. Mr. Edmonds quietly sat it out. I don't know what punishment, if any, was meted out to P. B. Lawton at the time."

"Ross Sheppard was then at his prime as a track star. He lived at the time northeast of the school. It was quite a common thing to see him trotting to school with a pack of lads trotting with him—not unlike an English hunter followed by his hounds."

The soccer competition each year was for the Rutherford Cup. Victoria was the perennial rival. Two teachers were permitted on the team—Strathcona fielded K. Barnett and Ross Sheppard.

"We did play truant on an occasional afternoon when we heard that a herd of silk stocking calves were loose on the stage of the Pantages Theatre. We had to see Bob Fitzsimons and his son. We were in fact pretty good kids. Only on Hallowe'en did we go a bit beserk and that only because the lanes were lined with backhouses begging to be tipped on their faces."

The school cry was:

Gazella! Gazella! Gazella! Gazay!  
Get out! Get out! Get out of the way!  
Reebo! Reebo! Rickety-rye!  
S.C.! S.C.! S.C.I.!

Edith Parker writes:

"Many fortunate kids in the 1930s lived within a few blocks of Old Scona High and could leave home fairly close to bell-time. Others, more hardy by necessity, walked considerable distances and were most adept at finding short cuts, both legal and illegal. Some fortunate few had bikes or could take a street car for a few blocks, but the majority of us were weather-beaten souls in the most literal sense, and made our way, come 40° below or 85° above, on shanks' pony. It was *de rigueur* that one went without head covering even in below zero weather; and noses, cheeks and especially ears, were often badly nipped during these winter treks



P. Rose, head of the Commercial division of Strathcona High School, and Arthur Rosborough, head of Scona division, and later principal of University High School. Photos 1940.

to our seat of learning. A kid who wore ear-muffs was just some kind of freak."

"The Glee Club in 1931 worked up a sort of mini-operetta. A special curtain was painted for the stage representing a garden of rather overblown and vivid flowers. A few of these—daisies, roses, etc.—were oversize and in the center a hole was left in the curtain so that solo singers representing these flowers could stick their faces through. The part of the gardener was a stellar role and was played by an older boy, with a remarkably good baritone voice, who walked up and down in front of the curtain. His name, I think, was Fred Bowen."

"Perhaps the best-known gathering place for the high-school crowd was the South Side Swimming Pool, where, for an incredibly small fee, you could swim for hours—beginning at 6:00 am if you so desired; after which many went to classes with wet hair for the rest of the morning. The covered, public bleachers on the south

side of the pool (alas, long since removed) were a great place to watch the swimming and meet your chums. Jimmy Crockett and Tom Chivers were among some of those who supervised and encouraged a number of excellent young swimmers and divers who reached very high competitive standards."

"The South Side Athletic Grounds was the scene of track meets where rivalry was particularly fierce among city high schools—Victoria and Eastwood from the north side were some of our strongest contenders. The Athletic Grounds were also the scene of the July first Highland Games and many high school students hopped the fence and got in free."

"Do you remember Jimmy Smith's South Side Covered Rink? How about the favorite winter hangouts—Garneau and King Edward rinks, and even Riverdale in the flats, if you didn't mind a brisk trot down into the river valley? On band nights, suitable skating music blared from the loud speakers, disturbing the peace of the local residents. Pair-skating was popular, the more ardent and untiring skated every band. At one Scona skating party, cards were issued, much like the dance cards, and partners solicited ahead of time. 'May I have this band?' Popular girls had all the spaces filled.

How about the California Confectionaries on Whyte Avenue—at least one of which had a marble-topped counter and stools at the soda fountain. A David Harum or a Banana Split was a work of art. If your mouth no longer waters at the memory of the coconut cream pie at the Commercial Cafe, or the superb banana and chocolate cream pies served up at the Rite Spot on 89 Avenue near the end of the High Level Bridge, then your sense of nostalgia is sadly atrophied."

Cathy Miller and Kay Wark remember the school days from 1932 – 1936:

"Meetings of the Literary Societies A and B were held once a month in the assembly hall on the top floor. The Lits consisted of performances by the students, with various levels of excellence, and various levels of enthusiasm. We recall in particular the violin recitals of Egon Grapentin, and the rapt silence with which his music was received.

The orchestra under the amiable Miss Bowman always rendered a few numbers, as did the Glee Club under Miss Munro.

A very personal memory is the publication of the school paper 'The Northern Light'. The cartoonists Eric Freifeld and Gordon Molstad and the typist and letterer Steve Balke in particular faced the frustration of working with Gestetner stencils. All of the 'editorial staff' assisted in hand-turning the Gestetner and final assembling of the copies.

'The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain', but at Scona High the rain fell mainly into pails strategically placed on the stairs and entrance halls. Walk with care!

The annual play directed by Mr. Edwards was a special feature. 'The Family Tree' starring Izzie Motkevitch and Olive Keith comes to mind."

## **Garneau High School**

In 1927 a division of Strathcona High School was established in old Garneau school (no longer standing) on 84 Avenue and 112 Street. The building had been vacated when the elementary students moved to the Garneau Public School at 87 Avenue and 109 Street.

The facility was at first just an overflow from the other crowded city high schools. Very soon this school was designated as a high school in its own right, Garneau High School. Under the direction of George Robertson it made its mark in both athletics and academic enterprise.

The enrollment in 1927 was 227.

One of the earliest teachers at Garneau High School was Wilfred Wees. He donated to the school a cup, the Wees Cup, to be awarded to the senior student with the highest average mark for the year. The present Wees Cup, awarded at Strathcona Composite High School for the same purpose, is the second edition of the cup.

Garneau was the first south side high school to produce a yearbook, in 1930.

From 1932 the school used several classrooms in Garneau Public School (the present day Garneau Elementary and Junior High School).

In 1935, in order to aid in the re-opening of the Edmonton Normal School during this difficult period, Garneau High School was moved into the Normal School Building, present day Corbett Hall on the University Campus.

The Garneau Rugby team of 1935 won the city Senior Rugby championship, and lost to Calgary Crescent Heights by one point. At this time Strathcona and Garneau were rivals in hockey, and in 1938 Garneau High School were south side hockey champs and provincial rugby football winners.



This frame building was the home of Garneau High School. It also housed the Commercial division from Strathcona High School, and later University High School.

### **Memories: Garneau High School 1927 – 1938**

The Garneau school play in 1931 received a good commendation from the reviewer in the yearbook. Max Grant as the Chancellor and Alan MacDonald as the King were singled out for special praise. Everything about the 'The Ivory Door' was excellent, except the door itself, which was stubborn and insubstantial, and balked at crucial moments in the play. The reviewer condemned it roundly.

Cay Isles, class of 1935, writes:

"In September 1931 I entered Garneau High in the ninth grade, as high school was from grade nine to twelve in our days. George Robertson was the principal of the 300 – 400 student school. Our

illustrious teachers included Harry Ainlay (who later became mayor of the City of Edmonton), Duncan Innes, and Maimie Simpson (who became Dean of Women at the University of Alberta)."

"One memory of that school that has lasted all these years was the daily poke that I, and other last minute students, would get from 'Robbie' who stood on the landing while the bell was ringing, holding his algebra pointer."

"Major Bruce Macdonald, the donator of the Harley-Millar-Sutton award at Strathcona Composite High School, was a classmate of mine, as were John Harley and John Millar. Harold Sutton was younger and therefore in an earlier grade than I at Garneau High School."

Garneau students will also remember 'Robbie's shrill whistle sounding in the halls.

The Lits at Garneau High School were lively affairs. In the final year of the school, 1938, we were entertained with lots of "rah rah", and swing music by Don Rose and his Rascals.



The three Garneau students in whose honor Bruce Macdonald donated the Harley-Millar-Sutton Trophy. Photos circa 1940.

## The First Composite School

In 1938 the south side high schools were consolidated. George Robertson became principal of the amalgamated high schools. J. Niddrie was head teacher in the main building. Duncan Innes headed Garneau division; P. Rose remained head of Commercial division in the old Garneau school.

The red and gold colors of Scona and the green and gold of Garneau were combined into the red, green, and gold of the new school. From the colors and the combination of three divisions comes the name for a new enterprise, the Tricolor yearbook, which continues to the present day. Sam Lieberman was the Tricolor director in 1939.

During the war years the combined high school population was accommodated in Strathcona Collegiate Institute.

Bruce Macdonald, a Garneau High School graduate, gave the Harley-Millar-Sutton Memorial Trophy in memory of the three students who had died during the war. "To be presented annually to the outstanding male student of the school—outstanding as a student, an athlete, and as a man—in the hope that he will maintain throughout his life the high standard of unselfishness and devotion to duty that these former students set. War, its sacrifices, and its sufferings, are too often soon forgotten. May this trophy and the names of those former students which it honors, serve to remind each student of this school that the freedoms he now enjoys were bought and paid for by the lives of such men as these:

Pilot Officer John Harley  
Flying Officer John Millar  
Flight Lieutenant Harold Sutton"

The numbers and activities of the school clubs increased during this period. In 1939 Miss Simpson's Drama Club made a film, called "Kampus Kapers". In 1942 the Drama Club with Brian Sproule as President presented radio plays over CKUA. The Christian Fellowship Club began in that year, as did the Curling Club. The Badminton and Swim Clubs were inaugurated, and rapidly grew in size.

In 1946, the school held a dance and presentation for Harry Ainlay, who had been elected mayor of Edmonton.



George Robertson, who was principal of Garneau High School and principal of Scona Composite High School from 1938 until 1949. Photo 1942.

In 1947, the annual "At Home" was broadcast by radio. Interviews were given by Duncan Innes, Harry Ainlay, and Ross Sheppard. The dances were at this time held in the Garneau school gym, and the need of an adequate facility for the Scona school building was made pointedly by the speakers.

Duncan Innes became principal in 1949. In 1950 the rooms in Garneau School again came under the administration of Strathcona High School; these rooms were called the Garneau Annex. The classes remained in the Garneau building with R. Clark as assistant principal in charge. He was succeeded in 1951 by Henry Ward.

The school colors at this time were maroon, green and gold.

The second Griesdorf Trophy was donated in 1949 by Abe Miller on behalf of his brother-in-law, David Griesdorf. It is now awarded as the girls' counterpart of the Harley-Millar-Sutton. The Duncan Innes Trophy, presented by the Home and School Association and first awarded

in 1955, goes to the girl who best combines athletic ability with sportsmanship, leadership, and service to the field of athletics. In 1950, the Jackson Brothers trophy was revived and given to the best school dramatist. The trophy had been presented up to 1935. As has been mentioned, the Scarborough trophy was donated in 1952.

In 1952 the Tricolor initiated an art and literary contest, with the results published in the yearbook.

## **Memories: Strathcona High School and Garneau division 1938 – 1955**

The consolidation of Scona and Garneau into one school created an awesome power in high school sports. Strathcona High School in 1939 were provincial Senior Rugby champs, and city-wide victors in hockey and soccer.

The taste and style in music varied over the years. In the mid-thirties, the students went wild over the Lambeth Walk. The craze of 1938 was the Chicken Reel.

The war years struck a more sombre note; at the annual "At Home" in 1942, corsages were forbidden and the ladies received instead red, white, and blue ribbons in the shape of a V for victory.

The deprivations and shortages caused by the war effort were severe. To save light and reduce the load on the street railway, school starting hours were staggered. Every Thursday, War Savings Stamps were collected. In 1941 city schools did not open on time in the fall because of a polio ban.

Many students will have fond memories of Mr. Levy, who for many years was the typewriting instructor at Strathcona and taught night classes.

Orville Stratte, who spent over a quarter of a century at Strathcona as student, teacher, and administrator, recalls his student days:

"The highlight of the 30s was meeting the 'Big Wheels' who then



Garneau Public School, which housed students of the combined Strathcona Composite High School between 1938 and 1955.

Photo 1955.

staffed the school and playing chess at noon in the basement of Strathcona Public Library with Eric Freifeld (now a renowned Canadian artist)."

Miss Holmgren taught Physical Education for many years in University High School, and old and new Scona. For 15 years she was a Guidance Counsellor at SCHS. The gym facilities in Old Scona were taxing, and she was one of the first teachers in Alberta to take the training course and give her students a form of flowing rhythmic exercises, which reduced the ruckus which interfered with classes directly below. She was also responsible for establishing inter-city badminton competitions.

Miss Brown began her distinguished career with the English department in 1954.

"The happiest June of my life occurred in 1954 when Duncan Innes told me I would be a member of Strathcona staff in the fall.

He carefully pointed out to me that the staff must enforce the rule that one set of stairs leading to the second floor was the 'up' set and the other the 'down' set. I surmised that the stairs must be in danger of collapse, but I loved the building and the inmates so much that after a week I was willing to go down with the building. Occasionally after classes I would scurry up the 'down' stairs to save time, but I always felt Lord Strathcona was tickling the back of my neck with his whiskers.

Mr. Innes was a legend in his own time and I admire him for so many qualities. In more than one staff meeting he told us to be compassionate as many of the students were undergoing trials in their lives that many of us would never know. He was a very kind man and a very sensible one.

The English 30 productions were especially dear to my soul. I recall many a dashing Hamlet and Laertes in the fencing scene. We spent hours grooming scenes for Open House. Well I recall John Stelck as Hamlet, clad in a fencing jacket he had made from his mother's white linen tablecloth and decorated with a red heart sewn over the appropriate spot. By the big night, he had a real weapon from the U of A fencing club. It was a wonderful performance and the audience loved it. But the strain proved too much for the dorsal seam of John's tights.

I hope the Strathcona years have been as happy for you as they have been for me."

The annual ritual of Freshman Initiation is remembered by every high school student. In the late 1940s and 1950s new students were called to the top floor assembly room, known jocularly as the "Attic Ballroom". The boys attended in ribbons and nylons, while the girls were decked in men's shirts, undershorts and mustaches. The stern justice of the Frosh Court's penalties was relaxed at 10:00 pm, when the chastened frosh joined into the dance.

The Sadie Hawkins dance was a favorite at this time; the ladies could turn the tables on the men, once they had paid the entrance fee—1 cent per inch of waistline, or perhaps 2 cents per pound. Joe McLaferty's Little Flower Barbershop got some free publicity with



School dances were a major attraction throughout these years. In 1949 the practice of choosing a queen was begun. Queen of the Ball, Marilyn Hughes, 1950.

the standing offer of a "shave" for the Abner judged to have the best set of whiskers. Remember: 'Uncle Joe needs your head to run his business'.

Hope Pennock writes:

"Hi Garneau students from 1949 to 1952. Do you remember that, although our numbers were small, the students came from near and far? Some walked the steep hill from the Walterdale area

twice a day; others walked, bused, or hitch-hiked from a couple of miles south. A bus load of students arrived from small communities east of the city, too.

Do you remember that there was only one student with a car at Garneau—Al Manning? Do you remember the crowded buses swinging and swaying to and from the football games at Clarke Stadium?

Do you remember the hike to University High School to take typing or home economics, or the trip across town to Victoria Composite for the boys to take Industrial Arts.

Do you remember, girls, the Y Teens Club with its guest speakers on boys and dating? Do you remember the pyjama parties?

Do you remember the clothes of the period? The boys wore drapes, chains, and Brylcreem. The girls wore plaid skirts, bobby sox, and saddle oxfords.

Three cheers for Garneau and thanks for the memories.”

The school cheerleaders led the cry at the school sports events, and contributed to the excitement at other city events, such as the Mercury parade and the Eskimo football games.

Some cheers from 1954:

“Orange crush, lemon ice  
Pass it once, pass it twice  
Kick ‘em high, kick ‘em low  
Come on Scona, let’s go!”

“Rub a dub dub, rub a dub dub  
We want Vic in a tub  
Wash ‘em out, ring ‘em out,  
Hang ‘em on a line  
We can beat Vic any old time”

The boast was no idle one. With the likes of Eskimo player (and later coach) Eagle Keys as team coach, Strathcona High School was a power in football.

In 1949 the practice of choosing Miss Scona at the semi-formal dance was begun. For a number of years, Phil McComb’s orchestra provided the music for these events.

Phil Davies, Rod Clark, Keith Pfrimmer and Jack Dawe remember their old fun spots:

"The Barn (the Trocadero night club) for dances; Spikes, which was home away from home for Sconaites; and in the winter a ride on the Toonerville Trolley to Saundar's Toboggan slide. Skip Currie provided street car transfers to all comers."

Lynne Forman and Doug Hepburn remember vividly their school in the fifties:

"The 50s were an era of Friday and Saturday night Teen Dances. Wes Dakus and the Rebels, the Nomads, the Rock-a-Tunes and of course the Shades from Calgary were bands we all remember jiving and twisting to at Seba Beach, Alberta Beach, Stardust Teens, Pleasantview Hall, Saltastio Teens and others. These dances were always packed.

Styles from the 50s will never be forgotten (in fact, they are coming back). Remember black leather jackets, greasy duck tails, zoot suits with chinks or drapes, wallets on long chains, rat-tail combs, red strap jeans, your steady's ring around your neck, pink and charcoal everything, and shoes so pointed you could step on ants in corners.

The Scona Bowling Alley on Whyte was a favorite lunch time hangout. You could save money by doing your own pin-setting (manually)—but watch out for that ball!

These were the days when men were men and women were women; at least, that's the way the ALCB saw it. The ladies were allowed on one side of the bar and men on the other, and never the twain shall meet. Favorite beverages included Lemon Gin, that wonderful pineapple-flavored wine called Zing (at least it was cheap), and of course Black Label beer in long neck bottles.

'The fifties were different and very nice  
Certainly the kind of years you'd want to live twice.  
They are gone now, a thing of the past  
But for anyone who lived them, the memories will last.'"

Sharon Clement says

"one of my strongest memories was that the principal (Duncan Innes) and the school secretary Iris spent hours tracking down truant students. It often appeared as if their days were spent checking the parking lots for those students missing one

period or in great detective work checking absentee notes to match signatures, dates, etc., to find one more student who had skipped. (Is it only because I was one caught that I remember so vividly?) What a joy for these same people to have the responsibility for attendance left entirely to the student as it is now."



The south side schools have an excellent record in team sports and many city and provincial championships. Here is represented action from a basketball game, in a yearbook prize winning photo from 1954.

## **University High School**

The school, also known as Varsity High, was formed in 1942 in the former home of Garneau High School. The building, long condemned and repeatedly judged inadequate, none the less was used for high school classes for over 30 years! The school playground took up two lots, where Garneau United Church now stands. The portable annex attached to it for many years was with affection referred to as "the chicken coop". In the "coop" were taught gym, drama and social studies. Arthur Rosborough, formerly a teacher at Strathcona High School, was the first principal. The school housed grades 9 through 12.

The formation of the school was the idea of M. E. Lazerte. He saw it as an extension of the Faculty of Education, providing classroom experience for University of Alberta students of education.

The school colors of green and gold were chosen, and the school crest designed by Wilma Lewko. The first University High School yearbook was published in 1944. The year plays were presented in Convocation Hall. The school paper was called 'The Spark'; it sold for 10¢.

In 1945 the school moved to the northeast corner of what was then the Education Building (present day Corbett Hall), which during the war years had been occupied by the RCAF. Harold Tanner, another former teacher at Strathcona High School and teacher at University High, became principal in 1948. He held a seat on City Council as well.

### **Memories: University High School 1942 - 1955**

George Luck remembers many teachers at University High School of exceptional ability:

"Arthur Rosborough: His 'heavy' hand was really a firm guide. An outstanding mathematics teacher, even his algebraic equations required a period at the end, for they were sentences, he stated.

Elmer Buxton (later Dr. Buxton, and Edmonton Public School Trustee): He taught English as it should be. He had been a student of Strathcona Collegiate Institute teacher Elmer Luck. He was an excellent blackboard artist and had been the Middleweight



This building was first used as the Alberta Normal School. It became the second site of University High School. 1930s.

Boxing Champion of Alberta earlier in his life.

Dorris Sheppard: Ross Sheppard's daughter; her middle name should have been Algebra. A strict disciplinarian, ending the issue with a smile. She spent hours of work each year on the School Operetta productions.

The school had, in my view, outstanding academic success. During its first few years of operation its students won many Tegler Scholarships, and in later years, Oxford Scholarships. The building itself was absolutely and completely unsafe, firewise."

Larry McMahon remembers:

"On warm summer days students would have the occasional class outside on the lawn to learn literature and perhaps (unknown to the teacher) study Nature.

Curling trips to Devon for the Annual Jalopy Spiel were always an interesting weekend."

At the University High reunion in 1979, Sherrill De Marco and Roger Deegan presented a song full of memories. For those who

weren't at that event, remember:

"Nice girls sat in Picardy's by the bunch  
But the fun was at the American Dairy Lunch.

Lits and dances at the chicken coop  
Some romances gave the 'Torch' a scoop."

## **Old Scona**

Many students from the Garneau building and University High School did not move to the Strathcona Composite High School building in 1955. They instead for the next three years were housed in Old Scona, until the new Bonnie Doon High School was opened.

The teaching staff of Old Scona in this period was drawn mainly from University High School.

In 1976, Old Scona reopened as an academic high school with Leif Stolee as principal. It is in use as a high school today. It seems that building is destined to be a high school forever! We certainly hope it stands forever, which is what the Strathcona Historical Foundation is hoping to ensure with their present campaign to have it designated an official historical site.



One of the classrooms in University High School. 1930s.



When they weren't hard at work, students could be found at the local sweet shop, whether it was Joan's or Betty's or the Tuck or the Top Hat or Spikes or the Mellow Moor or Frankies or, as shown in this photo, the corner booth at the Garneau Theatre Coffee Shop, 1952.

## SCHS

The lack of adequate space for city high schools, which had been felt since the 1930s, was remedied after prosperity blew in with Leduc #1. An ambitious school building program was begun and the south side got a new facility, Strathcona Composite High School.

The school cost over \$3,000,000 to build and furnish. Rule, Wynn, Rule were the architects. The school was designed for 1050 students. Land in South Side Athletic Grounds was generously granted by the City.

The school was in use by September 1955. It was far from being ready. The academic wing was not ready until September 1956; for the first year 40 teachers and over 1000 pupils lived cheek by jowl with one another and work crews.

The formal opening of the new school took place on 26 January 1956. Anders Aalborg, the Minister of Education, gave the address; the school was officially opened by Donald Bowen, member of the School Board. Also on hand to lend dignity to the occasion was the mayor, His Worship William Hawrelak. A golden key (no longer extant) was presented by the architect.

Nearly 50 years after Strathcona Collegiate Institute, another Strathcona school had been built, again with the latest of modern equipment. The pool was added a couple of years later, and Scona's tremendous success in swimming and diving competition continued.

In 1959 Strathcona teams adopted the name Lords, symbolic of the associations with Lord Strathcona and the original south side community.

C. S. Wilkie became principal upon Duncan Innes' retirement in April 1965. During the 1970 year I. M. Nicoll was principal, but 'Stan' returned the next year.

Centennial celebrations in 1967 were extensive. The fine portrait of Lord Strathcona was presented to the school by CPR. The year's events included a huge birthday party for Canada, and a special Concert Canadiana. The relevance for Strathcona Composite High School was increased because 1967 was the diamond jubilee of the laying of the cornerstone for Strathcona Collegiate Institute. Interest in the history of the school was very high. A historical survey was undertaken by the Social Studies department, and a reunion corner was set up during the



Strathcona Composite High School as it appeared when just built  
in 1955.

Annual Scholarship Tea where alumni could gather.

The school clubs expanded into new areas. A strong Science club has had many winners in the Edmonton Regional Science Fair; an Electronics Club was begun by Mr. Brown.

An ambitious drama program has been a long-standing hallmark of SCHS. Mr. Pimm was the drama teacher at the opening of the new school, as he had been for the last two years at University High School.

The Scona Art Club, for many years under the direction of Orville Stratte, has contributed very significantly to the improvement of the school through their annual purchase and donation of a painting.

In the sixties and seventies the staff and students worked to find a larger say for students in running their school. Those of the time will remember the intensity with which the issues such as "girls wearing jeans" and "how long is long hair" were treated.

In 1973 the Ross Sheppard Academic Trophy was inaugurated, to reward the Grade XI student with the best academic average. In 1977 a companion trophy for a Grade X student was donated in honor of Isa Soper's long association with the school.

From 1974 to 1977 D. I. Nixon was principal. In 1977 Lee Phipps became principal of the school. She has been active in acquiring and organizing the school's history in the archives room, and preparing for

this homecoming.

In early 1982, Hazel Rutherford, the daughter of Premier Rutherford, presented the souvenir trowel from the 1907 cornerstone ceremony to the Strathcona School Archives.

### **Memories: Strathcona Comp 1955 – present**

Chief's Store, across 104 Street from the school, was as much an institution as the school itself. You went for a smoke at Chief's whether you smoked or not. If you skipped school and needed a note, Chief would supply paper, etc., if you had what he felt was an acceptable excuse. He also hid many a student (who was cutting classes) behind the meat cooler when Duncan Innes came checking. But Chief was always there on the staff team whenever a sporting event would pit staff against students. Chief was the unofficial counsellor and confidant to many a student.

Ralph Clarke tells of two classic student stunts:

"Howard Hohn had a 1955 Chevy in mint condition which also happened to fit squarely on the rails of the CPR line which ran just behind the Dub; there was a lot of spilled root beer the day the CPR trainmen went on strike and Howard's navy blue Chevy came down the tracks, sounding his horn for the crossing."

"Didn't you know that Strathcona principal Duncan Innes had a pet aardvark? Well, neither did he until the first in an apparently long line of callers drew his attention to an ad in the Pets column of the *Edmonton Journal*. 'For sale, pet aardvark. Likes children.' When the pranksters called about mid-afternoon, Mr. Innes, with a heavy sigh, told them it had already been sold."

In the 1960s, Muk Luk week was inaugurated, and students got their first taste of moose meat (or something passed off as moose meat).

Students of 1964 will remember "El Liberator". Barry Wilson, who staged a mock take-over of the school for a noon-hour pep rally. Six years later an entire rival nation, complete with a mind-boggling foreign policy and a stirring national anthem, was created in the confines of the Music Room. Long live Musicrheumania!



C. Wilkie, who was Strathcona Composite High School principal  
from 1965 to 1974.

Linda Blue recalls

"the sixties were still the age of the double standard: the guys all 'made it', but good girls didn't. Going steady was the thing to do and girls proudly displayed their steady's ring."

In 1966 a dress code was in effect in the schools. On dates, narrow ties and white shirts were in for the guys, pastels for the girls. For a real romantic evening, Guiseppi's Pizza was the place to go, with candles stuck in wine bottles on every table and folk groups providing the background. Folk spots abounded: The Cave-In in the basement of Holy Trinity Church, and the Yardbird Suite, were two. Zorba's was the most prestigious night spot (remember the fake ID's some used to gain entrance?)

Moira Staples adds that

"an alpaca sweater, corduroy slacks and brogue shoes were considered the right things to wear. For girls the original mini-skirt had arrived. In school in 1967 slacks for girls were considered suitable only in 'inclement weather' (20 below or worse,

when wearing a mini-skirt meant certain death from exposure)."

In the seventies we see Gaylord coming out of the closet as a successful mascot and school symbol. He was designed by Carol Harvey.

Strathcona Composite High School has an excellent record in track and field, having many city and provincial record holders and a virtual stranglehold on the city team track title in the 1970s.

The 1977 yearbook mentions a rugby team which was formed that year, and describes it as "Scona's first rugby team"! How quickly they forgot.

And why **did** Red House always win House League?



Garneau, University, and Strathcona schools have presented many enjoyable dramatic productions, and have been the seed ground of many talented performers. Here is a scene of dramatic intensity from the 1978 year play.

**Friday, 8 October 1982**

*High School Football: Scona vs. Eastglen*

Strathcona Composite 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

*“Come As You Were” Beerfest and Wine and Cheese Party*

Edmonton Northlands 8:00 pm – 12:00 midnight

Convention Inn South 8:00 pm – 12:00 midnight

**Saturday, 9 October 1982**

*Open Houses*

Strathcona Composite 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Old Scona 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Garneau School 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Corbett Hall 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Teachers will be present 10:00 am to 2:30 pm.

*Family Picnic*

Hawrelak Park 12:00 noon – 3:00 pm

A fun run will be held in conjunction with the picnic.

*Memory Lane*

Strathcona Composite 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

*Homecoming Ball*

four city hotels 6:00 pm – 1:00 am

**Sunday, 10 October 1982**

*Nondenominational Worship*

Strathcona Composite 10:00 am - 11:00 am

*Senior's Tea* .

Strathcona Composite 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

*Memory Lane*

Strathcona Composite 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

*Alumni Variety Show*

Strathcona Composite 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm



The quest for academic excellence has been both pleasurable and successful for many thousands of students. A school motto for all the south side schools could well be: "Reach for the Top".

Strathcona's team of 1978.

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